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CIA RECRUITING AT COLLEGES
OHIO

The image of the Central Intelligence Agency may be improving on Ohio college campuses, sparking fewer protests and more job prospects among students.

The CIA is sending recruiters to about 200 campuses nationwide, including many in Ohio, searching for soon-to-be graduates in engineering, liberal arts, computer sciences, accounting and Russian and Arabic languages.

Among the schools on the CIA's recruitment list are Ohio, Kent and Cleveland state universities, the College of Wooster, Oberlin College, Denison University, Case Western Reserve University and the universities of Akron, Dayton, Cincinnati and Toledo.

The CIA has not said how many students it has interviewed, but college officials rate student interest from moderate to high.

Michael Mellone, director of career planning and placement at the College of Wooster, said there were no protests this fall when five students were interviewed for training positions as overseas intelligence operatives. A small protest was staged last fall, he said.

"I'm one of the luckiest placement directors in the country who can have the Peace Corps and the CIA interview on the same day and have full schedules -- which goes to show you the diversity of the student body here," he said.

At the University of Akron, about 100 students registered to speak with five CIA recruiters who visited the campus this fall, said Marilyn Carrell, director of career planning and placement.

"They have recruited only for engineers and computer scientists in the past four years," Carrell said. "But this fall they have begun to recruit more than engineers, and they'll probably recruit in the spring."

Elsewhere in the country, protests have been more common, but apparently have not hurt the agency's recruiting efforts. The most recent protest was at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst last week, where 60 people were arrested for disorderly conduct during a sit-in.

About 300 people protested two weeks ago at the University of Colorado when the agency interviewed about 75 students. Protests also have been staged at the universities of Colorado and Wisconsin.

STAT Sharon Foster, a CIA spokeswoman in Langley, Va., said student interest in potential jobs with the agency is up 50 percent from last year.

"The agency doesn't come on campus to create a disturbance," she said. "We come to recruit, just as any other employer does ... We're looking for people from applied mathematics to zoology and everything in between."